



## Background

### ***Expanding Transportation Options Is Route to More Independence for Older Residents and Persons with Disabilities***

- A resolution to expand and improve the number of transportation options for older Americans was third on a list of 50 significant recommendations delegates presented to the President and Congress during the 2005 White House Conference on Aging (WHCoA.)
- The WHCoA resolution to “Ensure that Older Americans Have Transportation Options to Retain Their Mobility and Independence” demonstrates a growing recognition that the number of realistic transportation choices for older residents must be expanded.
- “Independence” is the key word. It’s the ability to remain in one’s own home or community and it’s what the vast majority of older residents and those who have a disability desire.
- Providing additional methods of transportation will allow more residents to continue leading rewarding lives in their own homes and communities. State, local and federal governments would also save millions of dollars that would otherwise be needed to provide institutional or other more restrictive and vastly more expensive care.
- Fortunately, thanks to the leadership of State Sen. Jonathan A. Harris, D-West Hartford and members of the Select Committee on Aging, as well as bipartisan support from other members of the Connecticut General Assembly, Connecticut is poised to make significant progress on this issue during 2006.
- In the first action of its kind in the nation, the Connecticut Legislature in 2006 approved start-up funding to help create four regional non-profit, financially self-sustaining transportation networks for older residents at no cost to taxpayers. Senate Bill 703 provides grants of \$50,000 for each municipality during the two-year period covering the 2006 and 2007 fiscal years. The funds will be distributed evenly to four municipalities with populations of at least 25,000, or to non-profit organizations in a municipality.

- The networks will be modeled after the unique and highly successful Independent Transportation Network (ITN) founded in Portland, Me., by Katherine Freund.
- Ms. Freund spoke at an information session in Hartford earlier this year sponsored by the Aging Services Division of the Connecticut Department of Social Services. She explained that one of ITN model's most unique features is that it uses automobiles—rather than vans or buses—to provide comfortable rides for older residents and people with visual impairments 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
- Affiliate programs are now underway in communities in Florida, California, South Carolina and New Jersey. Ten more are expected to become operational this year and the organization expects up to 70 will be operating by 2010.
- During the spring of 2006, the Connecticut Department of Social Services~Aging Services Division sought requests for proposals from municipalities wishing to participate in the program. Those selected to receive state grants must demonstrate that they can secure \$25,000 in private matching funds and work cooperatively with their area regional planning agency to develop the system.
- As Connecticut's 169 towns and cities work to help older residents lead rewarding lives now and in the future, providing more independence through improved transportation is a key to success.
- If it's embraced by our communities, businesses and other sources of private funding—and of course older residents—the ITN model will increase the number of transportation options available and help improve the quality of life for tens of thousands of Connecticut residents.

**For more information on ITNAmerica visit the organization's Website at [www.itnamerica.org](http://www.itnamerica.org) or call (207) 857-9001. Information is also available from Roxanne Aaron-Selph, Connecticut Department of Social Services~Aging Services Division, at 1-866-218-6631 or on the department's Website, [www.ctelderlyservices.state.ct.us](http://www.ctelderlyservices.state.ct.us).**

**The Connecticut Commission on Aging is an independent state agency solely devoted to enhancing the lives of our state's older adults and preparing for their secure future. In carrying out its mission, the Commission leads public/private-sector efforts to promote and improve public policy on issues including health care, long-term care, transportation, financial security, housing, employment, legal assistance and many others. For detailed information about the Commission, as well as links to many other websites and publications that provide useful information on issues affecting older residents, please visit the Commission's website at [www.cga.ct.gov/coa](http://www.cga.ct.gov/coa) or call (860) 240-5200.**

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